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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence

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DRAFT WORKING PAPER

Administrative Services

1. It has seemed unreasonable to us that the enemy could have so few staff and support troops in relation to their maneuver strength. In the past few months, we have made a review of captured documents and interrogations available on the subject of Administrative Services. This effort has led us to conclude that the pre-Tet estimate -- about 38,000 -- is far too low, and that the actual number of Administrative Service troops prior to the offensive was on the order of 75,000 to 100,000.

2. We have prepared our estimate of Administrative Service troops in two components. The first includes the strengths of province and district level units which support local force VC troops; the second includes strengths of units subordinate to subregion, region, front, and COSVN. We believe that the evidence for the first component is reasonably good, but we are somewhat less sure of the second component.

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3. On the basis of a review of captured documents from 29 of the 225 VC districts and 5 of the 33 VC provinces which give comparative strengths of Administrative Service personnel and infantry-type units (the province infantry force and district company or platoon), we have been able to establish that there is a ratio of about one to one between these two personnel categories at the district level and a slightly lower ratio (in favor of infantry) at the province level. Application of these ratios to the total number of infantry-type local forces results in an estimate of 27,500 Administrative Service troops subordinate to the provinces and districts, about 8,100 higher than MACV's estimate of Administrative Services strength for these echelons (see the table).

4. We have made use of the one to one ratio in estimating the number of Administrative Service troops which support the Main Force and NVA elements subordinate to subregion, region, front, and COSVN. Although a number of factors cause this ratio to vary widely from area to area, we think, that, on balance, one to one is likely to be conservative.

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5. You will recall that additional large numbers of staff and support troops providing services similar to those provided by Administrative Services are subordinate to divisions and regiments. These troops are carried in the Main Force OB and not under the Administrative Service category. In order to compare the ratio of staff and support troops with combat troops, we have subtracted these units -- with an aggregate strength of about 28,000 men -- from their normal place in the Main Force OB and added them to the Administrative Service troops, which MACV has already identified as subordinate to regions and COSVN. This would then make our ratio 46,000 support and staff troops -- that is, 28,000 removed from the Main and Local Force OB and 18,000 identified by MACV -- and 85,000 combat troops. To achieve the one to one ratio, which we believe more accurately describes the true picture, it is necessary to add an additional 39,000 to the staff and support side of the ratio. When these 39,000 additional troops are added to the 18,000 already identified by MACV, the total estimate of Administrative Service troops serving at subregion, region, front, and COSVN levels becomes 57,000. Summing the two components

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of the estimate -- 57,000 and the 27,500 at district and province levels -- we reach 84,500. Because of the tenuous nature of much of the evidence, and because of the gross estimates employed in arriving at some of the components comprising the 84,500, it is expressed as a range of 75,000 to 100,000.

6. For some organizations, more specific evidence has allowed us to make individual estimates. For example, we have expanded the MACV estimate of 10,100 COSVN-subordinated Administrative Service troops to 15,000 in order to restore those troops that were dropped when MACV "scaled down" Groups 81-86 by one-third. A document captured in late December 1967 reveals that approximately 1,800 men serve in Administrative Service units subordinate to Military Region IV; when its subregions are included the total reaches approximately 3,500. These and other specific estimates total 19,500. The remaining 28,000 to 53,000 Administrative Service troops we ascribe to the remaining organizations for which MACV carries 7,025 in the 31 January 1968 OB.

7. The principal source of the difference between our estimates and the MACV estimate of

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Administrative Service strength lies in our differing assessments of the character of these forces. We believe them to be primarily full-time, skilled, professional soldiers. MACV tends to dismiss large numbers of them as part-time or ineffective personnel. In addition, MACV has not yet included Administrative Services subordinate to certain subregions and fronts in its estimates.

8. The quality of Administrative Service personnel varies considerably within given units, and some personnel occasionally listed in documents -- cooks and washerwomen, for example -- may be unworthy of being carried in the military OB. The number of such persons listed in documents is small, however, and it is therefore reasonable that almost all personnel belonging to what are defined as Administrative Service units should be recognized as part of the Communists' military establishment. In the past, however, MACV has "scaled down" the numbers of service and support troops reported in documents.

9. Captured documents suggest that the experience, professionalism, and seniority of Communist Administrative Service personnel is somewhat higher than that of Communist combat troops and that few work

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on a part time basis. The quality of Administrative Service troops is also reflected in the high percentage accorded to Party membership -- a sure measure of strength in a Communist context.

10. Although the Communists have attempted to draw down on staff and service units to maintain combat strength, we do not believe they have been able to in any great measure. Their Administrative Service units were hard pressed to service past force levels; as the level of combat and forces increased, so have support requirements.

11. Longstanding and widespread use of civilian laborers for transportation tasks has served to reduce the enemy's total requirements for staff and service troops. Were it not for these porters, far greater numbers of Administrative Service troops would be required. These laborers are used only for the most menial chores, however, and require Administrative Service troops as supervisors. It is doubtful that further significant substitution of civilians for Administrative Service troops would result in many additional soldiers freed for combat duty.

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Administrative Service Strength
31 January 1968

<u>Organization or Echelon</u>	<u>Estimated Strength</u>	<u>MACV OB Strength</u>
District level	15,000	9,500
Province level	12,500	9,900
Subtotal	<u>27,500</u>	<u>19,400</u>
COSVN level	15,000	10,100
DMZ front		0
B3 front		0 <u>a/</u>
Tri-Thien Military Region		800
Military Region V		3,700
Southern Subregion MR V		0
Military Region VI	750	500
Military Region X		200
Military Region IV (Subregions Included)	3,500	600
Rung Sat Special Zone (SR 10)	250	150
Military Region I		500
Military Region II		850
Military Region III		850
Other		125
Subtotal	<u>57,000</u>	<u>18,375</u>
Total	84,500	37,775

a. Included in Main Force OB.

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